

HESS (R. J.)

OCT 15 Rec'd

MEMORIAL OF

Dr. Nathan Lewis Batfield,

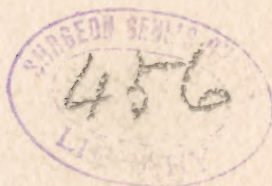
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ROBERT J. HESS, M. D.

PREPARED BY RESOLUTION OF

**The Northern Medical Association
of Philadelphia.**

Read at a Meeting held February 24, 1888,
and ordered to be printed.





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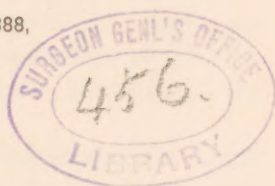
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Obituary.

Nathan Lewis Hatfield was born on the second day of August, 1804, in Montgomery county, of this State. His ancestors were patriots, taking a prominent part in the early history of our country. His grandfather participated in the Revolutionary struggle, and his father commanded a company in the war of 1812.

More than ordinary care was devoted to his early education. He attended the village school at Trappe, in Montgomery county, where the first rudiments were received. This school was taught by an able man, F. R. Shunk, who afterwards became Governor of Pennsylvania. He subsequently attended an academy quite celebrated in its day, presided over by Drs. Wylie and Engle, and afterwards entered the classical department of the University of Pennsylvania, from which he received the degree of A. B.

His medical studies were commenced with Dr. Elijah Griffiths, a man quite prominent in his day as a practitioner. After attending two courses of lectures in the University of Pennsylvania, through the influence of friends who were active in the movement to establish a new medical school, he entered the Jefferson Medical College, just then inaugurated, and after attending one

full course, graduated as M. D., in 1826, in the first class that left that institution. During his entire professional life he maintained a warm interest in all that concerned his Alma Mater, and was identified with its growth and prosperity. For some time before his death he was the oldest graduate of the school.

He began the practice of medicine in Philadelphia, in the district of the Northern Liberties, immediately after his graduation, and soon gained a large and lucrative practice. Some of the physicians in his neighborhood, during the time of his active professional life, were among the most successful practitioners of Philadelphia: Drs. Gilbert, Janney, Warrington, Levis, Ritter, and others whose names reflect credit upon the profession, and some of whom were honored members of the Northern Medical Association.

During the active period of his life he contributed many articles to the medical journals and to the transactions of the State Medical Society. He held many important positions of honor in medical organizations. He was a member of the City Board of Health, and served as president from 1846 to 1848. He was elected a fellow of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, January, 1855. He was for many years a member of the Philadelphia County Medical Society, and frequently represented that Society in the meetings of the State Association. He served as vice-president of the Pennsylvania State Medical Society in 1866, and was a member of the American Medical Association since 1848. He also was a member of the Alumni Association of Jefferson Medical College, of which he was president in 1874;

of the Rocky Mountain Medical Association, and of the California State Medical Association. He was consulting physician to the Northern Dispensary of Philadelphia, and a member of the Northern Medical Association from its earliest history, serving as president several times, and for many years upon the Board of Censors. Elected a manager of the Northern Dispensary of Philadelphia, June 20, 1856, he served as chairman of the Committee on Physicians. During the entire period of half a century of practice he was "a constant supporter of medical organization and professional ethics."

I have briefly sketched a few of the tangible incidents in the life of one who was identified with our Association from its very beginning. During a long period of his life he took a prominent part in the discussion of medical subjects brought before the meetings. As the years passed, although prevented from regular attendance, his interest did not diminish. His heart was kept warm by the memories of the past; and, while he loved to speak of his medical friends and associates of former days, for whom he cherished a fraternal affection, he was none the less interested in the young and progressive members of a later day. Serving upon the Board of Censors for many years, he was solicitous that the good name and character of the Northern Medical Association should be maintained, and applications for membership were carefully considered. The same interest was taken in the medical standing of the staff of physicians of the Northern Dispensary during the time that he was a manager; and many of our present members will recall his official visits and professional inquiries when they were candidates for positions in that institution.

In contemplating the life and character of our late member, I may be pardoned if I speak with more than ordinary feeling. For the last ten years my position brought us together in very intimate companionship. I was a frequent associate with him in his visits to patients who, even in his declining years, were glad to trust their all to his care. I spent many hours with him in pleasant converse, which was both entertaining and instructive. His memory for events, political, professional and social, was remarkable. He had been active in many of the important events that marked new eras in city and State. He took an active part in the discussions held at the time of the separation of the Old and New School Presbyterians in 1834-37, and was present at their reunion in Philadelphia a few years ago. Of the interesting incidents and events of those historical occasions he would frequently speak.

In the epidemics that visited Philadelphia, his active and earnest zeal was manifested in personal exertions and in self-denying labors.

In his early professional life he served as a surgeon to one of the Philadelphia regiments of militia, and his fine appearance and soldierly bearing is remembered by some of his contemporaries. While president of the Board of Health of Philadelphia, he advocated those measures which were beneficial to the best interests of the people, and was in advance of the time in regard to the hygienic requirements of a growing city.

He saw the rise of the two great medical schools of this city from their small beginnings. Many of the men whose fame is the heritage of the present generation of

physicians were his contemporaries and friends. In delightful retrospect he would tell of the special attainments and peculiarities of practice or manner of the noted worthies of his time. He saw the growth of the numerous hospitals and asylums and charitable institutions with which we are so well supplied. He watched the development of our noble art, which has kept pace with every invention, and with every new discovery has been modified and improved. Even the type and character of many diseases had changed during the long period since he began the practice of medicine.

He advocated the establishment of a hospital in connection with the Jefferson Medical College; and in an address delivered before the Alumni Association, on the close of his official term as president, he urged its importance and necessity, saying that the establishment of such a hospital was "now the great desideratum" of that school.

In manner the doctor was courtly; in disposition, mild and benignant. The weight of years sat gracefully upon his brow, and the strength and beauty of manhood remained until the last. As a physician he was eminently successful, maintaining the confidence and love of his patients and the respect of the community in which he labored. In a pre-eminent degree he possessed the qualifications which distinguish the good physician. He was "skilful in the arts and resources of the profession;" he was "kind in word and manner;" he was "sympathetic and cheerful;" and of him it was frequently said that his presence was balm and encouragement to the sick.

He was "truthful, honorable and conscientious;" and could look back upon a long and laborious life with the calm and serene assurance that, with singleness of purpose, he had attained the full measure of success in "the most excellent of all arts," "the most dignified, exalted and honorable calling."

During the long time that I knew the doctor intimately, I never heard him speak an unkind or uncharitable word; and those who knew him more intimately for a much longer period have borne like testimony to that wonderful dignity of mind, which, while none the less sensitive to the slights and injuries of life, was yet too benevolent to resent, too gentle to harm. In Christian resignation he bore the sorrows and bereavements of life, and his declining days were spent in kind and gentle ministrations to his friends. An attack of bronchitis, which, apparently slight, his enfeebled body was unable to resist, was the immediate cause of his death; and early in the morning of August 29th, 1887, in his eighty-fourth year, he sank quietly to sleep, surrounded by his family, his last moments calm and serene, like the closing hours of a long summer day which gives promise of a brighter dawn before the shades of night have fallen.

